
Congressman Greg Walden's Oregon Congressional Connection

Your Direct Link to the News and Events in the Nation's Capital

Monday, June 10, 2002

Dear Fellow Oregonian:

As Congress inches closer to adjournment in the fall, Capitol Hill is a frenzy of activity with committee hearings and legislative action on the floor. Last week the House passed a popular measure to make permanent last year's repeal of the "death tax," and this week we're taking up a similar measure on the marriage penalty, which was also phased out.

I'm also keeping an active schedule in Oregon as I travel around the 2nd District to hear firsthand from the good people I represent in the U.S. House. Last Saturday, June 8, the House Resources Committee held a field hearing at my request in Frenchglen in Harney County on the implementation of legislation I introduced last year that created the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management Area. If you scroll down, you can learn more about why I requested this hearing and what the witnesses at the hearing discussed.

In this week's Oregon Congressional Connection I've included some of the news from Capitol Hill and around Oregon that's taken place since I last emailed you, as well as information on the House floor schedule for the coming week. You'll also find the schedule for House committee hearings and an update on the Klamath Basin. As always, you can find additional information about developments in Congress on my web site at www.walden.house.gov, which I've just updated.

If you have any questions or comments about this e-newsletter or anything else taking place in Congress and our nation's capital, please e-mail me at greg.walden@mail.house.gov. My staff and I will get back to you as quickly as possible.

I hope you find this week's Oregon Congressional Connection informative. Thank you.

God Bless America.

Congressman Greg Walden

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Klamath Basin Update

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be holding a free workshop tomorrow, June 11, in Klamath Falls that will instruct Klamath Basin agricultural producers about cost-share and incentive payment opportunities for soil and water conservation practices available in the 2002 Farm Bill. The workshop will be held at 7:00 PM at the Klamath Falls OSU Extension Auditorium, located at 3328 Vandenberg Road.

As you may recall, my colleagues on the House Agriculture Committee and I worked hard to get \$50 million included in the Farm Bill under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for long-identified water quality and water quantity improvement projects in the Klamath Basin. This federal investment will go a long way toward completing the water quality and quantity improvements that are necessary for the Basin, and it's important that we make the right decisions about how to spend it. This workshop will give farmers and ranchers in the Basin an opportunity to provide input on how these funds are going to be dispersed. It's also important for members of the Klamath Basin community to hear firsthand from the federal government what their plans are for the use of the Farm Bill money.

The June 11 workshop is one of several workshops sponsored by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District to introduce local agricultural producers to cost-effective land management techniques through a variety of soil and water conservation practices and programs. Topics covered in the workshop will include an overview of Farm Bill conservation programs, technical and financial assistance available through these programs, conservation tillage and residue management techniques, and noxious weed identification and control.

Representatives of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District will be on hand to offer instruction and receive input from Basin producers. Seating at the workshop is limited to 100, and local landowners interested in attending the workshop are encouraged to contact the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District at (541) 883-6932 (extension 101) to give notification of plans to participate in the event.

District Wrap Up

Resources Committee Field Hearing on Steens Mountain Legislation

On Saturday, June 8, the House Committee on Resources held a field hearing in Frenchglen in the heart of the Steens Mountain to evaluate some of the land use issues that have arisen since the passage of the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act of 2000. I'm reasonably sure that Saturday's hearing was the first congressional hearing ever held in Frenchglen!

As you may know, I introduced legislation in 2000 to preserve the traditional uses of Steens Mountain after learning that the Clinton Administration was planning to declare the area a national monument, which would have severely curtailed the historical way of life of ranchers and others who work and recreate on the mountain. My legislation was the product of a year of close collaboration between members of Oregon's congressional delegation, local landowners, environmentalists, federal and state officials, and other users of Steens Mountain. When my bill was signed into law by the President in 2000, it was regarded as an innovative compromise that ensured the continuation of the traditional uses of Steens Mountain while providing the surrounding area with greater environmental protection.

I requested that Saturday's field hearing be held to evaluate our progress in implementing the Steens bill and to give the Resources Committee an opportunity to hear firsthand from the people most affected by this legislation. Specifically, the hearing looked into difficulties private landowners are having in gaining access to their property through wilderness areas, as well as issues involving access to the mountain by recreational outfitters and other land management issues. During the hearing the Resources Committee heard testimony from a varied group of interests that included federal officials, ranchers, recreationists and environmentalists. Congressman Mike Simpson, who represents Idaho's 2nd Congressional District and sits on the Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, joined me at the hearing.

Since the passage of the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act, questions have arisen with respect to the "historical uses" of the mountain, which my legislation was drafted to protect. In particular, the Montana-based environmental group Wilderness Watch has sought to deny the use of the mountain to the 27-year-old Steens Mountain Running Camp, which brings young people from across the country to Harney County. Wilderness Watch has suggested that 150 runners traversing the wilderness areas three times a year would affect the "solitude" of the wilderness. To put this in perspective, keep in mind that if each of the runners were spread throughout the wilderness evenly, they would each occupy 1,100 acres – an area equal to the size of New York's Central Park. If this is not "solitude" and "sanctity" as required by the Wilderness Act, I don't know what is.

The hearing record, which was developed for the benefit of the entire Resources Committee, memorialized the testimony given during the field hearing. The hearing consisted of three panels of witnesses, whose statements will be made available for members of the Resources Committee who were unable to attend.

Witnesses testifying at the hearing included Chuck Wassinger, Associate State Director of the Oregon State Office of the Bureau of Land Management; Tom Dyer, District Manager of the Burns District BLM office; Miles Brown, Field Manager for the Andrews Resource Area; Stacy Davies, manager of the Roaring Springs Ranch and member of the Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC); Fred Otley, grazing permittee; Jerry Sutherland of the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club and SMAC member; Harland Yriarte, director of the Steens Mountain Running Camp and SMAC member; Cindy Witzel, operator of the Steens Mountain Packers and SMAC member; and Bill Marlett, executive director of the Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA).

George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch, was invited to attend the event or submit written testimony explaining the position of his organization with respect to the Steens Mountain Running Camp. Nickas did not appear at the hearing and has not yet submitted testimony.

News from Capitol Hill

House Passes Measure to Repeal Death Tax Permanently

On June 6, 2002, the U.S. House passed a measure to make permanent last year's repeal of the inheritance tax, otherwise known as the "death tax," which refers to the tax rates of up to 60 percent that must be paid on the value of a family business or farm when the owner dies. The death tax was passed four separate times over the years to fund military buildups or wars. The first three times – 1797, 1862 and 1898 – the tax was repealed within eight years. However, in 1916, the death tax was again enacted to support a war – World War I – and it has never been repealed. In the 2001 tax year alone, 1,590 Oregonians filed death tax returns.

According to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, when all of the compliance, collections, and administrative costs of the death tax are added together – those paid by the government and by taxpayers – the costs of the death tax exceed the revenues it generates for the Treasury. The National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) estimates that the death tax results in more than 70 percent of family businesses not surviving the second generation and 87 percent not surviving the third generation.

As you know, Congress passed a comprehensive tax relief package last year that included a provision to phase out the death tax gradually over 10 years. However, this law will expire after December 31, 2010 because of a "sunset" provision that was included to

comply with Senate procedural rules. Because of this sunset, after the death tax has been phased out by the year 2010, it will return with full force on January 1, 2011.

The Permanent Death Tax Repeal Act of 2002 (HR 2143) was introduced to remove the sunset provision and ensure that our repeal of the death tax does not expire. HR 2143 passed in the House by a strongly bipartisan vote of 256 to 171. Since coming to Congress in 1999, I've consistently supported measures in both the 106th and 107th Congresses to repeal the death tax, and I was proud to vote in favor of eliminating this unjust tax permanently.

The repeal of the death tax is principally about preserving jobs in Oregon and across the country. When family businesses are forced to pay a huge tax bill to comply with the death tax, it removes capital that could otherwise be spent to expand businesses and create new jobs. In many cases, the tax causes family businesses to close their doors, which costs employees their livelihood. Beyond that, it's a simple matter of fairness. The death tax amounts to double taxation. Small business owners and family farmers pay taxes throughout their lifetime, then at the time of death they are assessed another tax on the value of their property. That's just not right. No one should be forced to get a visit from the undertaker and the IRS on the same day.

On Thursday, June 13, we're scheduled to take up a similar measure – the [Permanent Marriage Penalty Relief Act of 2002](#) (HR 4019) – to make last year's elimination of the marriage penalty permanent. I'm hopeful that our efforts to pass this legislation will meet with the same success as our repeal of the death tax.

Mt. Ashland Ski Area Expansion

I've recently been working with Senator Gordon Smith in an effort to secure the funds needed to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed expansion of the Mt. Ashland Ski Area, which is in the process of developing additional intermediate and beginner ski trails. Our efforts began in March of this year, when the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) notified Mt. Ashland personnel that funds that had previously been allocated for the FEIS would be insufficient to complete the federally mandated study. Because the expansion project cannot proceed without additional financial resources to finalize the FEIS, Sen. Smith and I have urged Chief Dale Bosworth, head of the Forest Service, not to cut short funds needed to complete the FEIS.

Sen. Smith and I delivered a letter to Bosworth in late May requesting that the funds needed to finalize the FEIS be provided to allow the expansion project to continue. Thousands of signatures have been collected on a petition urging funding to complete the FEIS, and Sen. Smith and I stressed the level of support the expansion project enjoys in the local community.

I followed up on our request with a phone call to Chief Bosworth on Friday, June 7. Citing assurances from regional USFS personnel, Bosworth responded that he felt

confident that funding to complete the FEIS would be found within the Forest Service's internal budget.

The Mt. Ashland Ski Area expansion has been ten years in the making, with a considerable investment of time, energy and money from the community that depends on this facility. After all the hard work that has gone into this project, it would be a shame if the expansion falls short so close to the goal line due to an uncompleted federal process. It's time to get this environmental impact statement finished, and I'm pleased that the Forest Service Chief shares my position. I look forward to working with Chief Bosworth in the future to move this project toward completion.

Retention of the 939th Rescue Wing

Following the tragic accident that took place on Mt. Hood on May 30, I joined a number of my colleagues from the Pacific Northwest in sending a letter to Secretary of the Air Force James G. Roche urging him to reconsider the planned transfer of the 939th Rescue Wing of the Air Force Reserve. The letter was signed by Oregon Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Peter DeFazio, Darlene Hooley, and David Wu; Washington Representative Brian Baird; Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, and Washington Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

The 939th Rescue Wing, which is currently based at the Portland Air Base at Portland International Airport, is scheduled to be re-deployed to Florida by the end of 2003. Our letter expressed concern that the transfer of the 939th would put citizens throughout the Pacific Northwest at undue risk. We also requested a meeting with the Air Force Secretary to discuss the May 30 accident on Mt. Hood, as well as proposals to maintain our region's search and rescue capability. Last year my colleagues and I wrote to Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Ryan opposing the transfer of the 939th Rescue Wing, but plans to move the unit proceeded despite our objections.

The men and women of the 939th Rescue Wing play a critical public safety role for the people of Oregon, and the heroism they displayed during last month's rescue mission on Mt. Hood underscores just how much Oregonians depend on their service. I'm hopeful that we can develop a solution that will enable the 939th to remain in Oregon, and I look forward to working with my colleagues from the Pacific Northwest toward that end.

On the Horizon

Oregon Institute of Technology Commencement

On Saturday, June 15, I'll be delivering the commencement address at the 54th commencement ceremony of the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT). The OIT campus is located at 3201 Campus Drive, Klamath Falls.

The ceremony will begin at 10:00 AM. You can call (541) 885-1000 for additional information on the event.

Committee Hearings – All Times Pacific

Tuesday, June 11, 2002

6:30 AM – House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs and International Relations Subcommittee hearing on "Combating Terrorism: Improving the Federal Response, " to focus on the need to streamline and consolidate federal counterterrorism efforts. (Part One) *Witnesses:* Sen. Joseph Lieberman, (D-Conn.), Chairman, Governmental Affairs Committee; Sen. Arlen Specter, (R-Pa.); Rep. William "Mac" Thornberry, (R-Texas); Warren Rudman, Chairman, U.S. Commission on National Security / 21st Century; Newt Gingrich, Commissioner, U.S. Commission on National security / 21st Century; James Gilmore, Chairman, Advisory Panel to Assess the Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism involving Weapons of Mass Destruction.

For more information on this hearing, click on the following link:

<http://www.house.gov/reform>

7:00 AM – House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits hearing on HR 3173, the Service Members and Military Families Protection Act of 2001; HR 3735, the Department of Veterans Affairs Overpayment Administration Improvement Act of 2002; HR 3771, to exclude monetary benefits paid to veterans by states and municipalities from consideration as income for purposes of pension benefits; HR 4042, the Veterans Home Loan Prepayment Protection Act of 2002; the Arlington National Cemetery Burial Eligibility Act; and legislation providing dependency and indemnity compensation to the surviving spouse of a veteran with totally disabling service connected cold-weather injury. For more information on this hearing, click on the following link:

<http://veterans.house.gov>.

11:00 AM – House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Procurement hearing on the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear stockpile.

Witnesses: Gen. John Gordon, administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration; Adm. James Ellis, Jr., commander in chief, U.S. Strategic Command. For more information regarding this hearing, please click on the following link:

<http://www.house.gov/hasc/schedules/>.

12:30 PM – House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security hearing to examine Social Security disability programs. (Part One) For more information regarding this hearing, please click on the following link: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>.

1:00 PM – House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hearing to be followed by a markup of H.R.4864, the Antiterrorism Explosives Act of 2002. For more information on this hearing, click on the following link:

<http://www.house.gov/judiciary>.

1:00 PM – House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources hearing to examine fraud and abuse of the Unemployment Compensation system. For more information regarding this hearing, please click on the following link:

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov>.

3:00 PM – House Energy and Commerce Committee full committee markup of HR 3609, the Pipeline Infrastructure Protection to Enhance Security and Safety Act. For more information regarding this hearing, visit the following link:

<http://energycommerce.house.gov>.

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

7:00 AM – House Government Reform Committee full committee hearing on helping U.S. Citizens held against their will in Saudi Arabia. *Witnesses:* Hume Horan, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia. For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/reform>.

7:00 AM – House Judiciary Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law oversight hearing on "Health Care Litigation Reform: Dose Limitless Litigation Restrict Access to Health Care." For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/judiciary>.

7:00 AM – House Resources Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health oversight hearing on "Process Gridlock on the National Forests." *Witnesses:* Dale Bosworth, chief, U.S. Forest Service. To listen to this hearing live, please visit the following link: <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/audio.htm>.

7:00 AM – House Small Business Committee full committee hearing on "The Effect of the Overvalued Dollar on Small Exporters." To listen to this hearing live, please click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/smbiz/audio/index.html>.

Thursday, June 13, 2002

7:00 AM – House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry hearing on "National Fire Plan and Outlook for the 2002 Wild Fire Season." To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: <http://agriculture.house.gov>.

7:00 AM – House Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management and Intergovernmental Relations hearing on "Medicaid Claims: Who's Watching the Money?" For more information on this hearing, click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/reform>.

7:00 AM – House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment hearing on Water Quality Trading: An Innovative Approach to Achieving Water Quality Goals on a Watershed Basis. To listen to this hearing live, please click on the following link: <http://www.house.gov/transportation/>.

8:00 AM – House International Relations Committee full committee hearing on "The Developing Food Security Crisis in Southern Africa." *Witnesses:* Andrew Natsios, administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development; James Morris, executive director, United Nations World Food Program. To listen to this hearing live, visit the following link: http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

On the House Floor – All Times Pacific

On Monday, June 10, the House will meet in pro forma session. On Tuesday, June 11, the House will meet at 9:30 AM for morning hour and 11:00 AM for legislative business. The House will consider a number of measures under suspension of the rules.

On Wednesday, June 12, the House will meet at 7:00 AM for legislative business and immediately recess. The House will reconvene at 8:00 AM in a joint meeting with the Senate to receive the Honorable John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia. Afterwards, the House will consider the following measures:

-- Motion to go to Conference on H.R. 3005, the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2002. The House approved this bill on December 6, 2001 by a vote of 215 to 214. The Senate approved its version on May 23, 2002 by a vote of 66 to 30. This bill establishes U.S. negotiating objectives in trade agreements and authorizes the president to enter into trade negotiations with foreign governments and international organizations. It also requires the United States Trade Representative to consult closely with Congress during trade talks and provides for any trade agreement reached by the president to be assessed by the International Trade Commission.

-- Motion to go to Conference on H.R. 4, the Securing America's Future Energy Act of 2002. The House approved this bill on August 2, 2001 by a vote of 240 to 189. The Senate approved its version on April 25, 2002 by a vote of 88-11. This bill provides incentives for cleaner energy sources and alternative fueled vehicles, promotes clean coal technologies, simplifies regulation of nuclear and hydroelectric power and reformulated gasoline and increases funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act.

-- H.J.Res. 96, the [Tax Limitation Constitutional Amendment](#). This measure amends the Constitution to require a two-thirds vote of Congress to impose tax increases on the American people except during a time of war or major military conflict.

On Thursday, June 13, the House will meet at 7:00 AM for legislative business. The House will consider the following measure:

-- H.R. 4019, the [Permanent Marriage Penalty Relief Act of 2002](#). This bill would make the marriage penalty tax relief provisions of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 permanent.

On Friday, June 14, no votes are expected.

Second District Trivia

This week's question: Why was the Rose Bowl game of 1942 between Oregon State University and Duke University moved east to Duke's hometown of Durham, North Carolina?

Bonus questions: Who won the game?

For the answer to this question and to take a crack at past questions, click here:

<http://www.walden.house.gov/trivia/trivia.htm>

For more information on these and other issues, please visit my website at www.walden.house.gov or call my Washington, D.C., office at (202) 225-6730. You can also call my Medford office toll-free at (800) 533-3033. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to dallas.boyd@mail.house.gov. If you'd like to be removed from the "Oregon Congressional Connection" list simply send an email to newsletter-request@or02list.house.gov and type UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.